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Okinawa-based Marines provide support in wake of tsunami

The III Marine Expeditionary Force assessment teams and Forward Command Element (FCE) will deploy to Utapao, Thailand to establish the command, control and communication structure as the U.S. Pacific Command's Joint Task Force-536.

The focus of the mission will be to prevent further loss of life and human suffering by expeditiously applying resources to the overall relief effort.

The Joint Task Force-536 Commander and III Marine Expeditionary Force Commanding General, Lt. Gen. Robert R. Blackman, conveyed his deepest condolence to the people of Southeast Asia.

"U.S. forces are moving rapidly to provide the needs and services requested by the governments of the region," Blackman said. "Our primary concern is to prevent further loss of life, and to conduct sustained disaster relief operations."

The forward presence of Marines on Okinawa significantly contributes to U.S. ability to respond to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and to alleviate human suffering. U.S. forces will remain only as long as necessary to conduct sustained disaster relief operations.